The Tract Society and Slavery.

SPEECHES

OF

CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAMS,

JUDGE PARSONS,

AND

EX-GOVERNOR ELLSWORTH:

DELIVERED IN THE CENTER CHURCH, HARTFORD, CONN.

AT THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE

Hartford Branch of the American Tract Society.

January 9th, 1859.

SECOND EDITION.

HARTFORD.

STEAM PRESS OF ELIHU GEER, 16 STATE STREET.

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1859

TO THE READER.

THE DISTINGUISHED NAMES which appear on the cover of this pamphlet, cannot fail to secure for it an attentive perusal. A word of history will sufficiently inform the reader why these eminent men, (all of whom are parishioners of Rev. Dr. Hawes, and two of them deacons of his church,) felt themselves called upon to speak on the occasion.

The Hartford Tract Society has been accustomed to hold its Annual Meeting early in January more than forty years—in connection with which, the friends of the cause in the City have contributed for its promotion. A short time before the anniversary of the Society this year, a few persons of like sympathies on the subject, organised a new society, auxiliary to the Tract Society at Boston—whose first public meeting was appointed and held in the Center Church (Rev. Dr. Hawes') on the evening of the 29th ult. The meeting was addressed by the pastor and several individuals from abroad, two of whom in particular—Rev. Drs. Bacon and Patton made a most ungracious attack upon the American Tract Society—denouncing its system of colportage, and its whole management and policy as unworthy the confidence and support of the Christian public—not sparing even the "Committee of Fifteen" from unmerited censure and abuse. Immediately following this meeting, the Secretary of the Society at Boston, who was present, spent a week or more in town soliciting funds for its use—the *entire movement* being a violation of an agreement between the New York and Boston Societies in regard to their respective fields of labor.

In view of the above facts, the three JUDGES were constrained by a sense of duty to stand up in defense of the AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY.

EDITOR.

HARTFORD, JAN., 1859.

Chief Justice WILLIAMS' Speech.

MR. PRESIDENT:—

My relations to the Society of which you are a branch, is my apology for appearing before you.

THE American Tract Society was formed in New York, in 1825, by pious gentlemen of various denominations, to diffuse a knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of sinners, and to promote the interests of vital godliness and sound morality by the circulation of religious Tracts, calculated to receive the approbation of all evangelical Christians. A publishing Committee was to be chosen by the Directors annually, neither two of whom should be of the same ecclesiastical connection, and no Tract should be published, to which any of the Committee should object. Their object was to diffuse such truths as would save the soul, and promote vital godliness and sound morality; and, to preserve entire harmony of feeling and action, no Tracts were to be issued but such as in the opinion of each of the Committee, were calculated to receive the approbation of all Evangelical Christians. Now without entering into a discussion on the technical construction of the constitution, which has been so ably conducted by President Wayland on the one side, and Chief Justice Shipley, Dr. Smyth, and "A Massachusetts Clergyman" on the other, it is apparent that it was intended to confer on this Committee the duty of judging what Tracts were calculated to secure the approbation of all Evangelical Christians; and for this purpose the Committee first chosen were men connected with the formation of this Society, and eminent for piety and talents—Milnor, Knox, Edwards, Spring, Summers and Summerfield, two of whom were annually elected for twenty years, and in succession served as Chairmen of the Committee thirty years or more. These men must have understood the spirit of the constitution under which they acted, and the course which they pursued was good evidence to their successors of what was the true meaning of that Constitution. They practically adopted the rule of the excellent Philip Henry, which was, "In those things in which all the people

of God are *agreed*, to spend my zeal, and as to those other things about which they *differ*, to walk according to the light God hath given me, and charitably to believe others to do so too."

Conducted by the men above named, and their successors, upon the principles of the Constitution, the Society pursued its quiet unobtrusive course for a quarter of a century, and extended its operations over a vast field, hitherto uncultivated, carrying light and life into dark and benighted regions in our own and foreign lands. Their colporteur, with tracts in his hand, has entered into fields which the ministry had never cultivated, where there was no Sabbath, and no Bible; there he has prayed with the sick, comforted the mourner with the consolations of the Gospel, proclaimed a Saviour to those who had never heard of the name of Jesus, and furnished bread and water for the hungry and thirsty soul. The thanks of Missionaries from every quarter of the globe have been received by the officers of this Society, for the assistance they have had from the books and tracts of the Society. Clergymen and laymen have given the most flattering testimonials to their value. The Rev. Dr. Alexander says, "I doubt whether in the world, at this hour, there exists an organization, the Christian ministry excepted, which is more effective in diffusing a knowledge of the truths of the Gospel among all classes of the people." The Rev. Baron Stow says, "Over all lands this Society has poured by the press, millions of streams of light and love. I know of no institution doing so much to fill the vials of incense in the hands of the angel standing by the altar." Letters of this kind might be cited to an indefinite extent; but I will only add the testimony of the Rev. Dr. Tyng.

In 1852 he testified his entire approbation of this cause, and had never seen reason to withdraw it. In 1855 he claimed that there was no occasion for an apology for a Society that had pursued its course of unabated usefulness for thirty years, spreading the knowledge of the Gospel in all lands. Had it proved treacherous to any of the fundamental truths of the cross, the proper divinity of the Saviour, the work of the Holy Spirit, justification by faith, he would have denounced and deserted it long ago. But he had been familiar with its course from the beginning, and its teachings he knew to be sound to the core. He was prepared to maintain, in the face of the whole world, that the Tract Society's platform

was altogether positive, altogether adequate, altogether sufficient. If objections were made, it was not on account of what they did, but on account of what they did not do. Who says our positive preaching of doctrine is false? What charges are made of vicious practices, or vicious principles? When the Society has incorporated a whole Bible, and not compromised a single truth; when every publication is breathing of a Saviour, and every page seems like a feather dropped from an angel's wing, all fragrant with the aroma of a higher atmosphere, and the sweet resplendence of the throne of God; then if men complain because we have omitted the tenth pin of the tabernacle, or have put a small *a* for a capital A, or have left off a word from a title page, he would deal with them as triflers.

So catholic was the foundation of the Society, and so judicious the course pursued, that for many years it might have been said of the Institution, "Woe unto you when all men speak well of you."

This unparalleled success roused the attention of some who were not desirous of seeing the progress of evangelical truth, and of others who felt that their pecuniary interests might suffer by the great circulation of religious books, and others still who were deeply engaged in the cause of freedom, were aggrieved that the Society took no active part in this absorbing subject. To have done that, would have been contrary to all the rules which had governed the course of those who had hitherto conducted the affairs of the Society. It seemed too closely connected with the politics of the country; the subject also had been taken under the peculiar care of one or more societies; it was a most exciting subject upon which good men greatly differed in opinion upon many points. Had the committee entered upon it, where should they stop if they began to instruct masters in the duty they owed to their slaves?—a call would have been made for the instruction of slaves in the duty they owed to their masters; what should they say to them? Should they instruct them to obey their masters in all things, or to flee from them? Should they tell them that all men are born free and equal, and that they may shed the blood of the man who deprives them of that which is more dear than life? or should they say, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward." These are some of the questions which would arise on approaching this all absorbing subject. They

had seen churches broken up, ministers dismissed, ecclesiastical societies divided, and the pillars of the Union shaken, in the controversy which had arisen. If under such circumstances the Publishing Committee declined to engage in the conflict which existed on this interesting subject, I cannot condemn them; on the contrary, I would say with Col. Tronchin, President of the Italian Society, at Geneva, "While we were bound to proclaim to every soul the true God and eternal life, it is no time to employ ourselves upon minor topics, on which the family of the Redeemer may see differently."

But as slavery was odious in the North, those who were designated as Abolitionists set up a cry against the Society, because they had not made slavery the subject of their publication in one or more tracts—as if the Society countenanced Popery because they had not published against the immaculate conception; or that they disobeyed the command of the Saviour in directing his disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, because they had not joined the Missionary Society in sending out the living preacher; or as if Paul countenanced idolatry when at Athens he proposed to the Athenian, the worship of an unknown God; or as if our blessed Lord meant to sanction the despotism of the Roman Emperor, when in answer to the inquiry whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, he answered, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." To those who then took the lead in this objection, it was of no use to say that this Society is a Society for union among Evangelical Christians—that its Tracts are designed to be circulated throughout America, and its issues must be such as will meet the approbation of all evangelical Christians. These objectors seldom allowed any to be of that character, unless they agreed with them on that subject.

A press called the "Independent" was established, under the care of a man known as a strong Abolitionist, and that paper, by the aid of talented and industrious contributors, has been assailing the Society by every weapon deemed lawful by the editors of the Secular Press, for the course the Society had taken on the subject of slavery; intimating that the Society had large funds, and insisting that they were unwisely if not improperly used. Finding that some real friends of the Society were alarmed by these continued attacks, some of the Executive Officers, in hopes of peace, con-

sented to the appointment of a Committee to investigate the affairs of the Society, and report. So far as regards the financial concerns of the Society, the Report was all that its officers could desire; and it is somewhat remarkable, while gentlemen are censuring the Publishing Committee as disregarding one part of the Report, they are themselves stoutly assailing another branch of the Report. The Committee say that the Tract Society was founded not to discuss disputed questions in theology, morals or politics; but to spread the truth in its simplicity and purity, as it is held in love by all Evangelical Christians, and cherishes the hope that by the Divine blessing, their views of the subject, would meet the approbation of their Christian friends in all parts of our country. They then recommend sundry resolutions, the fourth of which is, "That in the judgment of your Committee the political aspects of slavery lie entirely without the proper sphere of this Society, and cannot be discussed in its publications, but that the moral duties which grow out of the existence of slavery, as well as those moral evils and vices which it is known to promote, and which are condemned in Scripture, and also much deplored by all Evangelical Christians, undoubtedly do fall within the province of this Society, and can and ought to be discussed in a fraternal and Christian spirit;" and in the ninth resolution, the Committee add "That with great confidence in the wisdom of the Executive Committee, we anticipate that their action in carrying out the principles contained in the previous resolutions, will be such as will tend to promote the widest and best usefulness of this Society, throughout the whole country:" and these resolutions were adopted by the Society. Now the charge is, that these recommendations and resolves have not been followed, that the Publishing Committee have been unfaithful to their trust, and in many instances language has been used which Christian men should never use towards Christian men: as that "They have betrayed their trust from the fear of men." As if such men as Drs. Knox, Magee, and Williams and their coadjutors, and Milnor and Edwards, and others who have gone before them, [for the Committee only followed the path marked out by their predecessors] were afraid to do their duty. These were not the men to shrink from duty through fear of man: they studied to know what was duty and to do it. After the annual meeting, the Committee were about to publish a Tract on the duties of Masters, but the notes of victory were sung so loud, and

and circulated so swiftly by those who had raised this excitement, that the South were led to consider it as an Abolition triumph. The news rejoiced the hearts of enemies, and awakened the fears of friends. Demagogues used them to advance their own political views, and enemies to the cause of religion rejoiced at the prospect of the diminished influence of this Society. Remonstrances came from all quarters of the South, individual ministers, colporteurs, agents, the Press, ecclesiastical bodies, and men of every name; and one denomination in Virginia representing one hundred thousand communicants, as we are now informed, did actually withdraw from the Society. These circumstances led to the inevitable conclusion that the proposed publication must end in a dissolution of all connection with the South; this certainly was an event never contemplated by this Society, as every one must believe, who knows that the vote of the Society was unanimous; other reasons from the terms used by the Committee had their weight, but in my opinion, the fact that we should thereby lose the whole south, was sufficient ground for the delay until the Society could be informed of this unexpected state of things. A year's delay in changing the course pursued for thirty years, was of far less importance, than the separation which must result from immediate action. The Committee had published the Family Bible with notes by Dr. Justin Edwards. They had published Tracts also on the great moral duties man owes to man, such as justice, charity, humanity, love of neighbors, hatred of oppression, and the great duties enjoined in the Bible.

Delay then was of little consequence, compared with the question of final separation; but it is said we are to do right at all events, and risk consequences; what is right may often depend upon the probable consequences; it was right for Paul to set before the Emperor Nero the character of his government, and his accountability to God for his dreadful persecution of the Christians, but we have no reason to believe he made the attempt. It would be right for some of our good ministers who at the North are declaiming against slavery, to go to the South and utter the same sentiments in the hearing of the oppressor: will they go? No, they tell us they should be in danger of losing their heads. It is well said in reply, it is better that one individual should lose his head than that the Tract Society should lose theirs: but what profit would there have been in this movement?—our tracts would have been shut out

from the South on account of the obnoxious Tract issued, and would have been of no use at the North where the relation of master and slave does not exist; and thus they were to forego the opportunity of preaching the redeeming love of Christ to millions of their fellow creatures. They may, too, have had in mind the advice of a pious foreign layman Col. Tronchin, not to allow any mingling whatever of politics and the Gospel. "One," says he, "can hardly form an idea of the danger that will result to Christianity from giving the hand or even the finger tips to political passions." And it is almost impossible to discuss the moral evils of slavery without becoming involved in a discussion of the evils of the system of slavery itself, which would, of course, connect itself with the political questions which the Committee say is to be avoided. Had the publication proposed been made, some said it would have been satisfactory to them; others said it was the beginning; and others claimed that a publication upon the duties of masters, would be wholly improper, as it would recognise the institution of slavery: and it is not easy to understand how the moral evils of slavery are to be dealt with, and that which produces them be left unnoticed. It would be like cutting the branches from a poisonous tree and leaving the body of the tree unmolested.

At the last annual meeting of the Society, the Publishing Committee reported to the meeting in a few well chosen words the difficulties and embarrassments under which they had labored, and the causes of delay in their publication, and a resolution approving the course of the Committee was proposed. The real question involved was, shall we now recall our colporteurs, and cease to distribute Tracts at the South as we have done with so great success for thirty years? Our pride said "Yes, we will not be dictated to," our hearts said "No, many souls have been saved by the great truths we have scattered so widely abroad, many more may be," and the course of the Committee was approved by an overwhelming vote. It has been intimated that this was procured by "a curious set of measures." What they were I know not; I have never known of any charge except that it was by the aid of New York merchants; why these gentlemen should not vote I know not. I am told that upon the test vote on Dr. Tyng's motion, there were 1,337 votes taken, of which three hundred and forty-five were in favor of the motion, and nine hundred and eighty-two against it;

and deducting all the votes of the clergy and laity from the cities of New York and Brooklyn, there would remain a majority of four votes. We had hoped that our Boston friends would have acquiesced in the resnlt of this meeting, and suffered the Society to have continued a great national catholic organization which, by its union, harmony and strength, might extend an increasing influence throughout the world. But we should feel much deeper sorrow, if by any act of ours, we had deprived ourselves of the privilege of assisting in supplying ten millions of our fellow men with the bread of life, with which for many years past they have been fed from the hands of the Society, and which has been so kindly received and so greatly blessed.

Speech of JUDGE PARSONS.

The venerable speaker who preceded me, remarked that the American Tract Society was organized in New York more than thirty years ago, by Christians of different religious denominations. To which I add, that it was formed in the spirit of Him who prayed that his disciples might be one. From that time until recently, that oneness has been manifested in their joint and cordial co-operation, in diffusing light and truth, wherever their agents or publications could find access to the abodes, or intellects, or hearts of men.

Their officers have been men of earnest piety, and of a self-sacrificing spirit. Able, faithful and laborious in their devotion to the interests committed to their trust; and such as to command the respect and confidence of good men through the length and breadth of our land.

As evidence of this, those who have had ample opportunity to know, have united in their testimony, as to the value, efficiency, and success of the Society's operations. The late Wm. Jay said: It is truly a Christian institution, founded on principles, and conducted in a spirit I peculiarly love. Dr. Miller said: I can only say in my old age, and near my last account, I stand ready to do all in my power to co-operate with your Board in its efforts to promote this precious cause. Professor Greenleaf said: It is a noble enterprise, deserving the hearty support of all who seek to promote the cause of Christ's religion among the destitute of our country.

In process of time however, some became disaffected: the management of the Society was impeached, insinuations and inuendoes were thrown out, and a special Committee of fifteen was appointed to investigate its business affairs. And I purpose to prove from their unqualified endorsment of the doings of the Society, that it is worthy of the highest confidence and undiminished support, of every friend of his country and of man.

This Committee in their report, presented in 1857, refer to the Society in its business and in its moral aspects. In regard to their business operations, having been furnished with every facility, and all the assistance they desired in making their investigations, as the result to which they came, they say, that the Society pays no extravagant salaries, allows no perquisites, and that economy and good management extend through those branches of the Society's operations. They say that the system of accounts by them pursued, needs no change to insure the most entire accuracy. And the Committee believe that the whole financial business of the Society at the Tract House, is managed and conducted with an economy and fidelity worthy of all praise. A full investigation was made in relation to the advantages of publishing their own books rather than leave it to private enterprise. Also, as to the capital employed; whether they interfered with other Societies; what was their profit, and how it was expended. And as the conclusion of the whole, they recommend no change in a single particular. This is the highest praise the Society could ask.

Judge Jessup, of Penn., one of the Committee, in his address at the annual meeting at which the report was made, said: The Society has undergone a close scrutiny, and has come out of it, like gold, tried and purified seven times in the fire. He would say it came out of it to-day, challenging comparison with any other religious society in the world. He could say from his position on the Committe, that the financial affairs of the Society were unimpeachably transacted.

The Committee further say; and let it be remembered,—that they were unanimous, each member adopting the report as his own; and Mr. Frelinghuysen said, their unanimity struck us with delightful and overwhelming surprise. The Committee say, that no part of their present operations can with propriety be curtailed. They cannot stop any branch of their business without seriously interfering with others that need enlargement, and that their system of book and tract publication and distribution, has thus far produced only good fruit to the glory of God, and ought not to be disturbed. And the Committee then recommend a resolution, that we gratefully acknowledge the favor of Divine Providence in the beneficent influence the Society has exerted upon our country and the world.

This high and just commendation from the Special Committee is given, after a full and most searching investigation into every

department of the Society's operations. And, as I suppose, with the hope and belief that the Society might thereafter pursue its benevolent object without further hindrance or reproach.

Why does not the Society stand on the same high ground to-night that it occupied in May, 1857? Its principles are the same, its object is the same, its mode of operation is the same, and its results are the same; and if it was true *then*, that it had produced only good fruits to the glory of God, and ought not to be disturbed, it is equally true *now*. And never were its fruits apparently more numerous, or more glorious than during the year 1858.

For several years prior to the appointment of this Committee, the Society was held up to the public as unworthy of its patronage, its officers as men undeserving of public confidence; men who were persisting in a course of action directly at variance with the wishes of a large portion of its members, and all its fancied delinquencies were discussed as matters of righteous indignation. And why all this? Solely because they refused to publish tracts which they conscientiously believed to be without the spirit and sphere of their organization.

Notwithstanding this, and with a full knowledge of all the facts, this distinguished and very excellent Committee of fifteen, call upon the Society, (I use their own language,) to acknowledge the favor of divine Providence in the blessing which has rested upon the Society in its onward progress of success and prosperity, and its beneficent influence upon our country and the world.

It is not denied but what the Society has pursued the even tenor of its way from that day to this. It has not deviated to the right hand nor to the left. Some of the former friends of the Society have changed their course, but not the Society itself.

And why should those good fruits, and which the Committee say are only good, be blasted? Why their operations be curtailed? Why their system of publication and distribution, which the Committee say should not be disturbed, now be interfered with? Why should this beneficent influence on the country and the world be counteracted or destroyed? I have heard it replied—The Society should have changed its course of proceeding, after the recommendation of the Committee; and therefore we complain, not of what it has done, but of what it has not done.

I answer, in the first place, that the report of the Committee is based upon what the Society had done up to May, 1857, and not upon any suggestions as to its future course. And its fruits and its influence are spoken of in terms of the highest approbation. The encomium of the Committee, and their declaration that no part of the Society's operations can with propriety be curtailed; that the channels of usefulness are becoming deeper and broader, and the Society is called upon to enter and occupy all these approaches to the perishing; that certain branches of their business needs enlargement, and that their system of book and tract publication should not be disturbed, is not said with a proviso, that you are to have the benefit of our opinion only on condition that you publish certain other tracts which we recommend. No, it is the honest expression of an honest opinion, calculated to quicken the energies of toil-worn servants, and speed them onward in their heaven-born enterprise.

In the second place, if any Society or Corporation appoints a Committee to investigate its affairs, or its mode of conducting business, and they recommend any change in its management, it is entirely optional with the Society or Corporation to conform to such recommendation or not. And in the case of this Society, although their recommendation was at first approved, yet, after everything had been written and said which could throw additional light on the subject, and enable them to come to a correct result, the Society by a vote of three to one, decided to pursue the same course which they had pursued for more than thirty years; and which they have the testimony of these good men, has produced such glorious fruits, and such a beneficent influence on the country and the world.

But it is said again, that the Society refuses to publish a tract on slavery, though it was taken exclusively from the Bible.

I answer, that the tract referred to was proposed after the final action of the Society; that it was heralded before it was born, and all along its growth and transmission to the Tract House; and it was publicly declared, that it was intended to test the Publishing Committee. And to say the least, it had more the appearance of an attempt to make capital, than of a sincere wish to have it published.

But suppose a friend to slavery were to select all the passages in the Bible which apparently favor that system; or suppose

another were to select every passage which enjoins obedience to masters and the duties of servants towards them; or suppose, in answer to certain tracts heretofore published, a Universalist should make a selection of texts, torn from their connection, in favor of Universalism, and send them to Boston for publication; think you that those gentlemen would permit them to be printed and sent forth broadcast over our land? I trow not.

But let it be further known, that at that very moment and for a long time previous, the Society were publishing and circulating those very texts, and every other text in the Bible, with a plain and practical commentary by the lamented Edwards who has gone to his rest in heaven.

But it may be said, we do not interfere with the Society in New York; we have only organized a Society through which those who prefer it may send their contributions to Boston. If this was all, it would be a matter of rejoicing that a way was opened by which those who have witheld their contributions for several years past, could now appropriate them more in accordance with their views of duty. I would that such men might open their hearts and their purse, and pour their thousands into the treasury of the Lord, and I bid them God speed. But it is no want of charity to say, that with a large portion of the opponents of the New York Society, such does not appear to be the object in inaugurating this new movement. It is virtually to divert and diminish its receipts, embarrass its operations, and curtail the circulation of its publications, and thus destroy its efficiency and power. That such is its object and design, if not expressed in words, is, to my apprehension, written in numerous publications and speeches with the clearness of a sunbeam. Within a few weeks after the last annual meeting, several churches and other religious bodies voted, (as reported by the papers) not to contribute to the American Tract Society, but proposed no substitute. In some few instances, it was voted, that the collection usually taken up for that Society should be appropriated to some other specific object.

And so far as their action was concerned, its effect was simply to weaken confidence in the Society, and lessen its receipts.

And if no such motive exists here, why form a new Society and hold a public meeting in this church, immediately preceding the time, when for more than thirty years contributions have been taken

up for the Society in New York. Why invite learned and able men to come here as its advocates, who are known to entertain the strongest prejudices against the Society in New York; one of whom, has publicly avowed his determination not to withdraw from the Society, nor contribute to its funds, and who at the last annual meeting, in reference to the vote of the majority, declared, that "in the long run the devil would not gain the victory." Virtually charging such men as Drs. Spring, Alexander and De Witt, and a host of the wisest and best men in our country, with acting under the delusion o the devil; and who added that he should never back out, but should be heard there again and again, so long as he had a tongue to speak or a hand to write, and should leave it to his children *to continue the war*, when his head should be laid in the grave, and his pulpit should be draped in mourning.

That the devil had much to do in promoting division and strife I cannot doubt; but whether his influence was more effective in producing the vote of the majority, than in perpetuating the hostility of some of the minority, I leave for theologians to decide.

And while it is not my province to advise, I cannot but wish that this able and ardent disputant, would seriously reflect upon what was said by the excellent Cecil, that "I could write down more than twenty cases, wherein I wished that God had done otherwise than he did; but what I now see, had I had my own way, would have led to extensive mischief."

And I cannot but think that this threatened war upon the Society, for all time to come, is particularly pleasing to the devil; and that every infidel in our land will join in loud acclaim his amen, and amen! And if it will not be considered obtrusive, I would ask some of his brethren to suggest to the Rev. gentleman to preach on the Sabbath preceeding the next anniversary, from the text, "Behold how good and how pleasent it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

But to return from this digression. Why attempt,—as some of the friends of this movement, in private conversation, have said they did intend,—to forestall those collections?

If they cannot act with *us*, as heretofore, why not, as the President said,—and I have no doubt with entire sincerity,—why not separate in kindness and good will?

But let me not be misunderstood. I have no complaint to make of the Boston Society: I hope its friends will increase their sub-

scriptions, and its usefulness be augmented a hundred fold: and I am entirely willing that the Society in New York should publish tracts on the evils and vices of slavery, if they deem it useful and expedient: but I decline to inscribe on my forehead the motto, "Do this or perish."

Nor do I complain of the Society just organized in this city. Many of its members are among my best and warmest friends. I will say, however, if it is intended to bring the influence of this Society to bear upon our rural townships, and to form Societies in our country parishes, the respective pastors must throw their influence into one organization or the other, families and friends will be separated, motives will be impeached, crimination and recrimination will ensue, churches and societies be divided, and the answer to the question in the Assembly's catechism—Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?—will ere long be exemplified in our State in the sad results of a well-meant, but ill-judged agitation. Nor do I object to their selecting their own time to hold their own anniversary; nor to the enlistment of whom they please as their mouthpiece. And yet, I will whisper in their hearing that divine injunction, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." But is not the inference to be drawn from such proceedings a fair and legitimate inference, that the object is not solely to receive collections from willing hands and the cheerful giver, but to prejudice the patrons and donors of the Society in New York, and to draw away and divert funds from its treasury? Now, if this principle is right for any religious body, it is for every religious body, and for every individual. Carry it out in practice, and withhold your contributions for a single year, and the Society is dead;—and all differences of opinion as to its future action will terminate.

It is no less a maxim of morals than of law, that every man is responsible for the consequences that naturally flow from his conduct. If then by your influence or solicitation you divert the funds of the Society, you destroy its efficiency and power, and you are responsible for the results. And as no conduct or action can be right upon which you cannot seek the divine blessing, it is right for every minister who recommends such a course of conduct, when offering his own, or the prayers of his people for the dissemination of truth,—for success in every effort to enlighten, to redeem, and

to sanctify men,—for success to the benevolent institutions of our land,—to add; but for the American Tract Society we ask no blessing. Its object is benevolent, its fruits good and only good, its influence beneficent, its success apparent and surpassing human expectation, but its thoughts are not our thoughts, nor its ways our ways; and on *that* let neither the dew nor the rain from heaven descend. Let the counsel of its officers be turned into foolishness, and let it come to a perpetual end. Who would not revolt from such a prayer? But I insist that this is only acting out the principle, and I present it in this form that I may call the attention of candid and considerate minds to the result of their actions.

And let me say that in the attempt to divert contributions from their former channel, such men are using their influence to abandon and break down an institution which, in the language of Rev. Baron Stow as cited by the speaker who preceded me, is doing more than any other to fill the vials of incense in the hands of the angel standing by the Altar,—an institution by whose instrumentality the poor have the gospel preached to them, and the scattered population of our country are brought under the influence and the power of truth. One word more and I have done.

I would that the influence of the Tract Society, as an element of moral power through our wide-spread country, might be more truly apprehended. And that the managers of every benevolent society might realize, that they are alike dependent upon a favoring public sentiment for the accomplishment and success of their high mission, and that they cannot put in peril a single foundation principle, or weaken public confidence at any one point, without endangering the interests of the whole sisterhood of benevolent associations.

Speech of Judge ELLSWORTH.

I AM no apologist for slavery,—much less for the extension of slavery into new territories and countries. I have a strong preference for free and intelligent laborers. Human slavery is a great and unmitigated wrong, and, like every great wrong, is a great calamity to all who are connected with it. And if anything could give strength and depth to my anti-slavery sentiments,it is the fact that slavery is likely to involve the duration and destiny of our country. In hope of concealing its enormity, and its enormous encroachments on freedom, it unceasingly cries out, Sectionalism! Sectionalism! while it is itself all sectional, all exclusive, and insatiable. Its sway is complete in the Congress of the United States, our national council, as is seen (and I speak from personal observation) in the election of its presiding officers, the organization of its committees, and the character and policy of many of its enactments and proceedings. It has reached and is felt and feared by the higher functionaries of the government.

Thus much I have thought it my duty to say on the present occasion, that I may place myself right on the record as to slavery, while I address you on another and kindred subject, more congenial and appropriate to the occasion. It is, what course the American Tract Society ought to pursue in relation to this exciting subject, and the course which American Christians ought to pursue in relation to this Society? Some persons insist that the Society ought to continue the course it has pursued for some forty years under the guidance of men of great wisdom, experience and piety, while others say, it ought to change its course and become more specifically and absolutely anti-slavery; and that it no longer deserves the confidence and charities of the Christian public. Now, this latter position is most surprising and startling, and he is certainly a bold man that will proclaim it, as certain gentlemen from abroad have recently done in the place where I now stand.

Let me say, first of all, that I have no quarrel with Christian brethren here or elsewhere, who seek for a new channel for the distribution of religious Tracts, and who can bestow their charity, designed for this purpose, with more cheerfulness and confidence through some other organ than the American Tract Society. I have no doubt of the sincerity and purity of their motives and aims, nor will I presume to assume to myself better intentions or higher sagacity than theirs, but I will say that they have taken upon themselves a great responsibility when they turn their backs upon this ancient, well-tried, ever faithful and divinely blest Society, and enlist under other leaders from abroad, who so recently addressed you here, and from whose remarks, if they have been correctly reported to me, I should infer, some of them would think it no loss to religion, if the Society's Tract House, with all its contents, was reduced to ashes, and the Directors and Secretaries turned out to graze on the mountains.

What, sir, is the difficulty with this Society? One proclaims that it publishes its Tracts when it should buy them of booksellers; another that it sends out ignorant Tract distributors under the graceful name of colporters, to the endangering of sound theology; another that they don't keep their accounts so that the true state of their affairs can be understood; that at one time they foolishly and unnecessarily waste the Society's money, and then again are rolling it up and investing it in buildings and machinery; and in short are conducting their business without wisdom, economy or safety, and that the experience of forty years is thrown away upon them; that they will not be enlightened, and some even surmise that their faithfulness, if not their piety, is becoming doubtful. As for patriotism, they absolutely have none at all, because they are not more specifically anti-slavery.

Well, let these charges go for what they are worth. I have no time to refute them, nor need I, for it has been done again and again in print, and may be read of all men, and there are few persons beside those who utter the charges, who believe them to be founded in truth in any degree, except as to slavery, about which I intend to speak before I sit down. Who, I ask, are these directors and secretaries that are thus seemingly arraigned for imbecility or unfaithfulness? Look over their names,—some thirty of them divines and laymen most distinguished in their several depart-

ments, for piety, knowledge, wisdom, experience, success in life, and, let me add, for financial and practical talent; most of whom have, year after year, generously and freely given days and weeks and months of toil and study, to their high and heaven-born trust. Are these the men to be reckoned incompetent or unfaithful? If such men as Frelinghuysen, Tyng, Milner, our own Williams, and their compeers, are to be recorded untrustworthy or incompetent,—where,—where, let me ask, shall we ever find safe public almoners? If this be so, well may we despair of finding Christian integrity. Let us then, close at once our organized charities, and each act for himself.

For one, I must express my repugnance to these flippant assertions, and my fear of the men who make them. However unconscious they may be of the consequences, they are shaking the confidence of Christians throughout the land. Sir, if these directors and secretaries who have so long administered this charity, are really incompetent for the places they attempt to fill, why, let them be removed at the first opportunity, and if votes enough cannot be obtained to do it, then let the minority remember that they may be the persons, after all, who are in the wrong, and that the majority may be in the right; at least, let them cease their defiant threats, and no longer use their distinguished talents and position to create suspicion and distrust as to this long-honored and beloved institution.

But, sir, the great charge against the Society is, I am persuaded, its refusal to assume a more distinct and specific attitude against slavery. I do not believe this Christian community have been or can be induced to withhold confidence or their charities from the society upon any other of the charges made. Now, as I am inclining to anti-slavery myself, somewhat, I shall treat this objection with all possible fairness and kindness, if for no other cause than the great esteem I have for Christian brethren here who have turned away from this Society as no longer worthy of their confidence or their bounty.

It is now nearly forty years since the American Tract Society was established in New York. Its aim has ever been—by means of tracts, cheap books, colportage, and papers for youth,—to spread broadcast religious literature through the land, and through all lands, especially aiming to reach the poor and unlearned, for their publications are not designed for doctors of divinity, (however some

of them might be profited by their careful perusal), nor for scholars. From the first, the Society has had the confidence, the co-operation and the charities of every portion of this vast country. Under this fostering influence and the blessing of God, it has grown from a germ to become a mighty tree, spreading its branches over our entire country and the world, and its ripe fruit is now dropping on every hand. It has become one of the great charities of the age. I ask now if God has not vouchsafed to it his blessing, and if we may not hope for it in all time to come? Yes, sir, it has had the prayers of Christians everywhere, and I have seen the very gentlemen who now come here to divert your benevolence and affection, standing in this place, eminent champions in its behalf; and I shall never forget a figure of speech made use of by one of them in his zeal for the Society. Said he, "Turn your pockets inside out that nothing shall be left in them." The course of the Society is the same now as it was at that time. Why then, cast suspicion upon its officers? Why weaken it in public estimation? Why restrict its operations? Why make us to grieve over the defection of valuable friends?

Now, Mr. President, I wish to look at this question practically. I am a practical man myself. I don't like technics anywhere; I don't like them in my profession nor in theology. I wish to deal with the subject just as my much beloved pastor deals with great truths in this desk from Sabbath to Sabbath. He has taught me the importance of common sense in the inculcation of truth. What in the end is to be gained?—this is the question. Or, in another form, how can the Society by its publications,—all of which are good and correct as far as they go,—reach the greatest number of minds, and plant in them the seeds of Christian truth? What does Christian expediency require?—for that again is the point. Will most good be done by closing every Slave State against the Society's publications and colporters? For, however the South ought to allow of the circulation of suitable tracts on the topic of slavery, still we know they will not, and that the putting forth of one such tract would be the means of excluding from their borders all tracts. This, I must think, the celebrated Committee of Fifteen did not at the time apprehend would be the result, but the directors on the ground, from further and full information, ascertained that such exclusion would inevitably result, and therefore they

judged it wise to delay a while, and to appeal to the Society for instructions. They did so, and their course was fully sustained: a proceeding of no unusual or extraordinary occurrence in human affairs. What good now will it do to publish tracts specifically anti-slavery? I say, what good will it do? Surely we are not going to run after phantoms, nor let our righteous indignation,—however the slave-holders deserve it, as we view the matter,—override all Christian prudence and expediency. This I conceive is the true question at issue, Christian expediency, how can most good be accomplished? If 10,000 persons can be reached and benefitted by such tracts as have been published, and only 5,000 by pursuing a different course, who will rise up and say the latter is the best one? Now, the gentlemen entrusted with the affairs of this Society, who bring to their duties as officers not only great wisdom and ability, but the experience of 10, 15, or 20 years, say it is not the best course, and the Society say it is not, and the world say it is not, and by the time the Society in Boston has published two such tracts, they will say it is not, for as Christian men they will soon discover they can find better and more useful matter for circulation.

When I say that the true question is one of expediency, I do not mean to use the word expediency in any low or unscriptural sense, for I am a full believer in the "higher law," as I understand it, to wit, our highest allegiance is to God. If politicians who use the word as one of reproach, mean something else by it, I may or may not agree with them.

From the last report of the Society I see that during the period of its existence, it has published more than 3300 different tracts and books in English, French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, Hawaiian, and Creek Indian, which are published from time to time as needed, and forty-seven during the last year. It sends out over 500,000 copies of the Messenger and Child's Paper monthly, to gladden the hearts of thousands of children in our Sabbath Schools and elsewhere. It has employed during the year, 800 colporters, warm-hearted, self-denying Christian colporters. Now, my Christian friends, will you, can you look with a jealous eye upon this stupendous and divine charity? Will you cripple its operations, will you withhold from it your confidence that never has been abused, or your bounty which has never been wasted or misapplied? Stay, stay, I conjure you, stay, the misjudged act.

I would not on any account speak or think unkindly of the Boston Society. It will do all the good in its power. I wish for it every possible success; but it is comparatively a small affair, you must admit, comparatively weak and inexperienced. Twenty years of hard labor and a full treasury will not give it the power to do good which the American Tract Society possesses and has possessed for many years. No, never, never, can any Society in New England fill the place of one in New York, and that one which you are asked to discard because its officers and the great body of its members cannot see the wisdom of identifying themselves more distinctly with anti-slavery efforts, which are advocated by the great body of the newspapers in every free State.

I have said nothing of the constitutional question about which so much has been spoken, for Judge Williams has most satisfactorily attended to that; and besides, I have always preferred to put the question at issue on the simple ground of Christian expediency. Every person can understand that, and can judge of its pertinency and force.

Sir, I will say but one thing more. If a man's affairs are involved in perplexing questions of law, he asks professional advice, and when obtained, thinks it most prudent to follow it. If his family are sick, he seeks a physician of integrity and skill, and follows the prescriptions he has received. So if private Christians wish to know how they can do the most good in distributing cheap religious literature through an organized Christian society, they will take the opinion of men experienced in the matter, and of enlightened and long-tried wisdom, but if they wish to carry a point merely, irrespective of its general consequences, they will not be likely to resort to such sources for information.